



Missing Child Policy

2024-2025

Children's safety is always maintained as the highest priority both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outing's procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

These procedures are written in line with current guidance Early Years Foundation Stage – (EYFS). The manager is responsible for ensuring all staff understand and follow these procedures.

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing a member of staff alerts the room lead and manager.
- This members of staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- If a security breach is a possibility, a lockdown of the preschool will be put in place.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted, and the missing child is reported to the police.
- A full incident report will be completed on the incident detailing how the breach of security occurred. Children's social care and Local Authority may be involved if it is likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the other staff back in the preschool. If the manager of staff has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole nursery outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The member of staff back at the preschool is contacted immediately, and the incident is reported.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the nursery or outing venue as agreed with the manager. The preschool is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the nursery.
- The manager contacts Abie Sanford and reports the incident who carries out an investigation and may come to the preschool immediately.
- The senior member of staff, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff should keep calm and should not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager member together with Abie Sanford speaks with the parent(s).
- The managers and Abie Sanford carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report;
 - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child;
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing;
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing; and
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff should co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care and the Local Authority may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangers Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed



Managing People

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The preschool manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the nursery manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the nursery manager and the other should be the owner. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.